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Mask masquerade – Welcome to Clown World: Part 1 – Nick Hudson of PANDA

19th August 2021 by Nadya Swart

Since the abrupt emergence of Covid-19, the wearing of masks – which is now vrmly entrenched as a legal requirement in our country – has been one of the most tangible reminders that the world around us has changed. This article by Nick Hudson, the co-founder of PANDA – Pandemics ~ Data & Analysis – is the vrst in his ‘Welcome to Clown World’ series. The article looks at the imposition of masks, stating that it is ‘illustrative of what we now know about virtually the entire programme of Covid

policy. It is rooted in unscientific nonsense, driven by fear and a corrupt relationship between billionaires looking to leave a mark on society, pharma and our institutions.' Hudson outlines the behavioural science mechanisms which have been used by various government institutions around the world in order to instil fear in their citizens – and the manner in which masks, in particular, prime these citizens into becoming more susceptible to the imposition of further, more draconian regulations. – Nadya Swart

Welcome to Clown World: Part 1 – Masks

This is the worst of a series of articles on the political clown world that public health has become as most of the world has abandoned all pre-Covid guidelines and principles of public health in favour of previously contraindicated policies that have, unsurprisingly, turned out to be not only ineffectual, but very damaging.

The masquerade

Prior to Covid, it was widely understood that cloth face masks provided no protection against respiratory viruses. The about-turn on this perspective was precipitous, but held by mask proponents to have been based on emerging science that refuted decades of trials. This is patent nonsense. Consider the US CDC, whose change of policy happened between 28 March 2020 and 5 April 2020. The emerging evidence during this week was a major study by the CDC itself, many years in the making, that concluded that, “We did not find evidence that surgical-type face masks are effective in reducing laboratory-confirmed influenza transmission, either when worn by infected persons (source control) or by persons in the general community to reduce their susceptibility.” If surgical masks do not work, then cloth masks certainly don't.

At the other side of the Atlantic Ocean the European CDC's clown show was beyond amusing. They published a meta-analysis using the GRADE methodology for evidence assessment supporting the face mask recommendation. From 118 studies that met the selection criteria, you'd think that we'd get a nice body of clear cut evidence to support the recommendation, but on the contrary. Only 20 studies met the stringent criteria required to build upon a mask recommendation under the

GRADE framework. But it doesn't end there.

The authors identified from the batch a single study without risk of bias, while the rest were either assessed as at serious risk or very serious risk. But even that single study is not shown to be bias free. By their own reckoning, two thirds suffered from serious to very serious indirectness problems – not actually testing the claim being made. Fully 95% exhibited very low to low certainty of evidence. That's right: the authors themselves rated the evidence that the 'true effect' might be markedly different from what the effect claimed is for 19 out of 20 studies.

But the show must go on. The only moderate (not high, just moderate) quality evidence found, cannot distinguish if masks are being efficacious or detrimental for infection prevention. The recommendation authors weakly acknowledged that when they said, "The evidence from this study is compatible **with low or no effect** of medical face masks for personal protection in the community." But, what it is interesting to note is that the study claim is slightly different: "Although the difference observed was not statistically significant, the 95% CIs are compatible with a 46% reduction to a **23% increase in infection**". Which is the academic way of saying: "We just cannot claim anything. We don't really know."

A single moderate quality piece of evidence is not enough to make a recommendation for an intervention as far reaching as the one issued. The fact that the study nonetheless concluded with a recommendation for face masks is all the evidence required to support the contention that science had been seriously politicised in the Covid era.

Over at the WHO, the clown show approach was more brazen. Even though their own website to this day confesses that "widespread use of masks by healthy people in the community setting is not yet supported by high quality or direct scientific evidence and there are other potential benefits and harms to consider", they decided to overrule their own experts, bowing to political lobbying and endorsing mask wearing. According to Deborah Cohen, a well regarded journalist at the BBC:



Deborah Cohen

@deb_cohen

We had been told by various sources WHO committee reviewing the evidence had not backed masks but they recommended them due to political lobbying. This point was put to WHO who did not deny

We said some people think we should not wait for RCTs before putting policies in place

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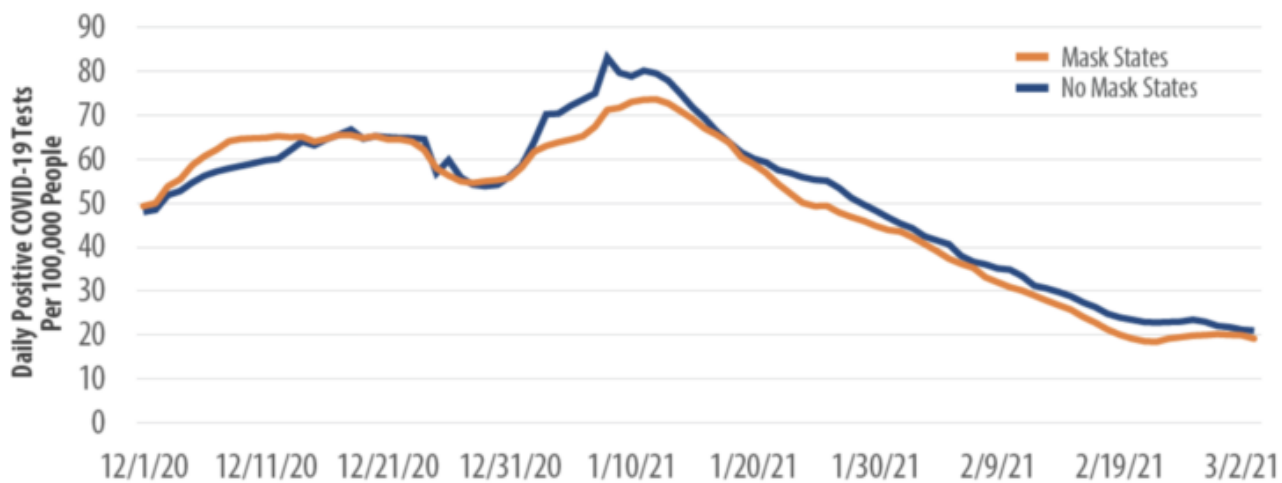
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But the grandest circus of them all is the farcical practice of forcing healthy people to wear face masks outside. This is a triple joke. Asymptomatic transmission is not an epidemic driver in the first place, outdoor transmission is very rare and, well, masks don't work. Each of those points would be good on their own to abandon such mandates.

The nudge

For a year or more PANDA has pondered charts like this and wondered why this pseudoscience of cloth face masks was so persistent.

Mask States vs No Masks States

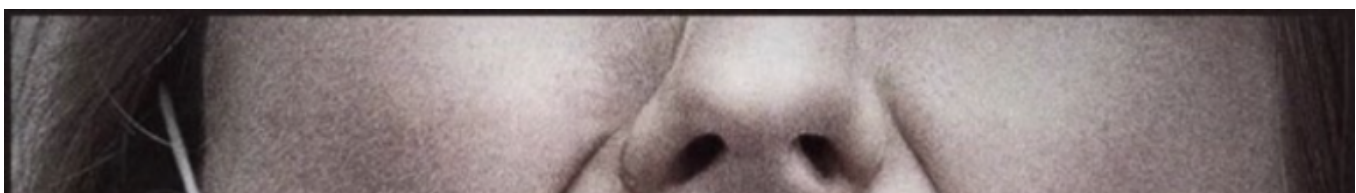


Data from December 1, 2020 through March 2, 2021 (7-Day Moving Average)

Sources: CDC.gov, covidtracking.com, First Trust Advisors

We suggested that masks were primarily used to support the creepy new paradigm for public health that aims to strike fear into the hearts of the population; that masks were intended to act as a constant reminder of the “deadly virus”. Of course, this earned us the usual howls of “conspiracy theorists!”, but then came a revelation.

In the UK, the Sage’s SPI-B behavioural science unit opined last year that ministers needed to increase “the perceived level of personal threat” from Covid-19 because “a substantial number of people still do not feel sufficiently personally threatened”. In her bestselling book, A State of Fear, Laura Dodsworth details how Gavin Morgan, a psychologist on the team, broke ranks, admitting that “Clearly, using fear as a means of control is not ethical. Using fear smacks of totalitarianism. It’s not an ethical stance for any modern government. By nature I am an optimistic person, but all this has given me a more pessimistic view of people.” **“Masks do more harm than good & the decision to mandate them for healthy people was introduced as a psychological control method.”** The result was a series of lurid, manipulative adverts, like this:





Similar revelations from leaks or freedom of information applications have also emerged from the “[Panic Papers](#)” from Germany, translated by PANDA [here](#), Ontario’s creepy “[Nudge Unit](#)” and Ireland’s [ISAG](#). Government behavioural science teams considered face masks to be ineffective for controlling viral spread, but recommended their deployment to create an exaggerated perception of risk. These paint a very clear picture of science being perverted to political ends and advanced by manipulative means, and this generalises. **ALL** standing pandemic respiratory virus guidelines have been summarily discarded in favour of draconian measures that can only be maintained if the public is held in a constant state of fear.

The face mask “nudge” works because it accords with a basic intuition. But the

mechanistic explanation for why cloth face masks don't work is quite simple. The aerosol particles that drive viral transmission are way smaller than the gaps in a mask. Only quite large droplets, about 1% of the total when measured, get caught, but these are simply aerosolised on subsequent exhalation and float off freely in the air.

Even if there was merit to the expectation of benefit, or evidence of benefit in real world data, PANDA's view is that it is unethical for governments to use secretive behavioural science manipulations on the citizenry and to censor people who point out that they're doing it. This is an ominous development that threatens the very foundations of democracy.

The enabler

All of this is amplified and enabled by the dual capture of mainstream media and public health institutions by vaccine stakeholders, for whom maintenance of a disproportionate response is convenient. This was on quite spectacular display in a Daily Maverick [article](#) by the "Scientists Collective", supposedly the crème de la crème of South African Covid science, which baldly opined that the evidence for face mask efficacy was "clear". The universities that employ the academics behind the Scientists Collective have received billions in funding from businessmen obsessed with creating a legacy of curing some or other terrible disease. When we reviewed their references, what we found was alarming – a clutch of incredibly weak observational studies that didn't even pass muster for entry into the European CDC study, including one that involved just a [pair of hairdressers](#) in Missouri. They also referred us to the WHO site mentioned above, which said there was no evidence. Anything to placate your funders, it would seem. Meanwhile, as in many countries, South Africans remove their masks under peril of arrest. What a risible and sad state of affairs!

Mask malarkey is illustrative of what we now know about virtually [the entire programme of Covid policy](#). It is rooted in unscientific nonsense, driven by fear and a corrupt relationship between billionaires looking to leave a mark on society, pharma and our institutions.

We have witnessed wrst-hand how viciously cancel culture has been applied to academics who are outed as PANDA members, and how almost all of the academics who are members take great care to keep their membership cryptic as a result. We routinely offer to debate with anyone who takes issue with our perspectives. I've managed to do so, with full decorum, on just three occasions ([here](#), [here](#) and [here](#)), but not once has anyone close to policy-making agreed to engage. The reason for this is obvious. The scientists behind the mania of the Covid response do not hold defensible positions and they know it. In fact, they depend upon the censorship and demonisation of their critics. Debate would be fatal.

Having witnessed science so seriously adrift during this epidemic, we are inclined to sympathise with John Ioannidis' classic 2005 paper “ [Why most published research wndings are false](#).” The public is beginning to see through all of this, and our fear is that science itself will take a beating, even though it is our corrupt academic and public health institutions that should.

Read Also:

- [Nick Hudson of PANDA – 'Academics are essentially on the payroll of the Big Pharma brigade'](#)
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THE RATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

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The ugly truth about RAs – Heystek

Investment strategist Magnus Heystek shares the ugly truth about retirement annuities in this hard-hitting interview. Worse, the government have made amendments to the regulations that make it troublesome to access your pension in the event of immigration. Heystek says he rarely advises retirement annuity-like products to his clients, due to their illiquidity as financial instruments. He also lambasts the front that many of South Africa's largest financial institutions put on when it comes to the tax benefits of these products, outlining that the benefits simply do not outweigh the costs. – Justin Rowe-Roberts



Magnus Heystek on the situation with retirement annuities in South Africa

"Before the unrest in KZN, government came with certain proposed changes under what circumstances you can withdraw money from a retirement annuity (RA), pension fund and provident fund when you decide to immigrate. Up to now, financial immigration was fairly simple. You would pay certain taxes, you will withdraw your money and it will leave with you when you decide to immigrate. Now that ruling was changed, so there's a three-year waiting rule, which is bad enough. Government has said your money must remain behind when you decide to immigrate. Now that's already creating consternation amongst a lot of people who might be middle-aged and might have R10m or R20m

in various retirement products that they've been told to invest in all their lives. And they need that money to set up a home or an office or a lifestyle somewhere else. But now that money is locked up. Now that's already creating a lot of anger and a lot of uncertainty.

And so and behold, last week government came with a new draft taxation bill which said, in addition to the three-year waiting rule, there will be an exit tax applied to those people who decide to formally immigrate. So that is not only immediate, it has a very severe impact on people who want to immigrate and they need the money now – that's now very debatable how long they're going to wait and what taxes they have to pay. But the question many people – younger people, professional people – they might not even be contemplating retirement now but they might some time down the road. There might be another flare up. Now, the big question is – is an RA still worth it? Should you even consider an RA in the sense that it's already a very illiquid investment instrument – it's subject to Regulation 28 of the Pension Act, which has severely impacted your growth because you were allowed 50% of offshore exposure over the last 10 years. And now you've got the uncertainty that although you're building up some retirement capital, you might



change your mind. You might want to immigrate for whatever reason.

How to transfer your retirement fund out of South Africa in 2021 and beyond

It's your money. The government is actually saying – it's not actually your money. We gave you that tax-free gap to put money in. We have a right what you do with your money when you pull that out. Now, that to me is very ominous. And people must be made aware of the fact that the government is already doing it and will increasingly exercise control over your retirement money. Which then, together with the retirement planning industry, has been urging you to put money away on the basis that people retire with not enough money and they're going to be poor

and destitute. But you putting your money into a monkey trap, you can put your hand through the trap, but you can't withdraw it. And that, to me, is very dangerous. And we need to debate this."

On new amendments to the pension fund amendments

"That's correct. It's not only your retirement annuities, it's also your pension fund and or preservation fund. Retirement capital now stays in South Africa. You can go – you and your family can go, but the money remains behind. You start your process and you have to come back three years later and you have to prove to someone in Treasury that you have immigrated."

Listen to the full interview

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Will SA rebound – or is worse to come?

By Alec Hogg*

Anyone reflecting on my homeland's fresh rock bottom would do well to recall our trait of ascribing much higher weighting to bad news than good. Esteemed researchers, Nobel laureate Daniel Kahneman among them, quantify it at nine-to-one. But Kahneman also preaches WYSIATI – What You See Is All There Is. The optics were very bad indeed for South Africa during the week running up to July 18, birthday of its delty Nelson Mandela.

The country's parlous state was captured during its risk-averse president's televised address two nights before the five day orgy of unrestrained plunder peaked. Cyril Ramaphosa, attempted reformer of the ruling African National Congress (ANC), was bereft of ideas. On eNCA, a livebox alongside the presidential lecture showed young men looting a branch of the national blood donor service at a burning shopping mall. That pretty much summed up what was afoot down.



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SA into the foreground of a global tend where dysfunctional nation states will split into smaller units. Other Afrikaner leaders talk of the unrest as a stark to create a nation

kms - 30% of the province - one fifth the size of England. The king retains many privileges of feudal rulers, including a generous state stipend. Also, he promoted institutionalised

Overlaid onto a stagnant economy, SA's pre-Zuma budget surplus became a massive deficit, funded by a trebling in the debt to GDP ratio from 26% to the current 80%.

centre of Gauteng, the plan involved dispatching young tribal Zulus armed with automatic rifles into Zulu-dominated communities. They offered their fellows an opportunity to loot shopping malls, promising protection, zero personal risk and no consequences.

Jason McCormick, a shopping centre developer who was on site defending these assets during SA's week of shame, says apart from shooting at security guards to open the way for the mob, the mini-impis specifically targeted fire-fighting equipment to increase the damage of post-looting arson.

The plan worked well in most parts of KZN, especially the capital city Pietermaritzburg, the commercial centre Durban, and in major rural towns Newcastle and Ladysmith. Large shopping centres were robbed, trashed and burnt. It was only through the intervention of local communities that anything was left standing.

Similar looting orgies were instigated in the commercial centres of towns near the provincial capital. In places like Mooi River, Richmond and Greytown, thousands of small businesses were wiped out, many of

Citizens in were abandoned by the state's security services in their hour of greatest need. Not surprisingly, they now question whether this fresh rock bottom is made of granite or sandstone. Will we finally rebound – or is it a portent of even worse to come? Right now it's a tossup.

Futurist Clem Sunter, a national treasure whose 1980s "High Road, Low Road" scenarios nudged the Apartheid establishment towards peaceful settlement, reckons full blown anarchy is now a 50:50 call. Prior to the riots he put it at 30%.

On the upside, leaders of organisations around which long-besieged Afrikaners have massed, are swinging from despair to cautious optimism.

Among them long-time pessimist Frans Cronjé, outgoing CEO of the 92-year-old Institute of Race Relations, is suddenly upbeat. Because he finally sees hope – believing the chaos could catalyse

of "communities of communities".

It has also accelerated already significant momentum for secession by the well governed Western Cape, the only province of nine not ruled by Ramaphosa's ANC.

What is the rational mind to make of all this?

Applying Kahneman's WYSIATI, it is obvious whatever his other failings, from the many interviews on BizNews during the chaos, Ramaphosa is correct in ascribing the July 2021's civil unrest to ethnicity.

Evidence suggests it was an attempted coup engineered by tribal Zulus, descendants of Shaka, victors at Isandlwana, and comfortably the largest single group in a country whose 11 official languages reflect its cultural diversity.

There are 10m Zulus in their KwaZulu-Natal heartland, a sixth of the national population and a rich prize for ambitious politicians.

Many live on land owned by the Zulu king's Ingonyama Trust's 28 000 sq

polygamy, an example followed by tribal subjects. Among them Jacob Zuma, he of four wives and 26 children, whom the ANC appointed the country's president in 2009.

In Zuma, the ANC chose a poor director, especially for a modern economy. More comfortable in an "ibheshu" (calf skin apron covering the butt) than besuited, while in office Zuma famously told a live TV audience that all other continents would fit into Africa, adding that the continent's biggest drawback was lacking a major river. He also publicly mused how, given dictatorial power, he'd quickly "fix" SA.

With hindsight, it is now clear that Zuma's ascension unleashed a plunder of national resources. This occurred through industrial scale theft and the dispensing of largesse to favoured groups like unionised public servants, university students and 18m recipients of social grants (in a population of 58m).

In December 2017, most of the nation celebrated when Zuma's anointed successor, former wife Nkuzasana was narrowly beaten by Ramaphosa at the ANC's presidential elective conference.

Since his deal-driven victory, Ramaphosa, raised in Soweto by a police sergeant father and mostly schooled in the family's Venda tribal homeland, has publicly campaigned to end corruption. Under his protection, the Zondo Commission into State Capture has ventured well beyond what was intended by its initiator, the same Jacob Zuma.

The anti-corruption attack's red letter day was on July 8th when Zuma was escorted to jail. Unrest which left more than 300 dead and directly cost over R30bn in looting and wilful damage to infrastructure, began within hours of Zuma's incarceration.

It was well organised. Focused in KwaZulu-Natal and Zulu-dominated pockets in the country's commercial

which had served local communities for decades.

In Gauteng, attacks on shopping centres were executed in Zulu-dominant areas often close to single sex hostels which are home to migrant workers from rural KZN. For five days and nights, for the most part the state's protective services were either completely absent or mere spectators. They did not apply the most basic mob-dispersing weapons like water cannons or tear gas. This supports the view of some observers, particularly in KZN, that the police was complicit.

In the middle of the chaos, McCormick's company even issued a desperate press release begging law enforcement agencies to help its mall in Thembisa after a "significant attack from high calibre, live ammunition throughout last night."

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